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136 delicate little *Hajojo* which resembles a flying squirrel, and which makes the prettiest if not always the most docile of pets. There are many more bush creatures perfectly known to Papuan (if not so well to European) zoology, and all, while they serve the more utilitarian purpose of diet, are especially interesting because their names constantly recur in the Aesopian legends with which Orokaiva folk-lore abounds.

136 Reptiles are not less common than in other parts of the
825 Territory. Snakes, from the python to the smallest and deadliest, are regarded with a queer mixture of feelings in which sometimes veneration, sometimes horror, and sometimes hunger gains the upper hand. The lizard is killed,
[251] its flesh dried in the smoke against some future feast, and its skin stretched over the drum as a tympanum. Crocodiles, the most terrible of the Papuan's natural enemies, abound near the river-mouths, and their attacks have sometimes been so frequent on village pigs and dogs and on women filling their gourds at the water's edge, that favourable settlements have had to be abandoned. Yet even the crocodile is often outwitted in the legends and occasionally caught and eaten in reality.

Flying-foxes or fruit-bats are numerous and destructive. From their camping-grounds, where they hang by day in lazy myriads from the branches, they steadily wing their way at evening to the gardens which they mean to plunder, and after this nocturnal migration may be seen steadily beating back at earliest daybreak. To the Orokaiva as to ourselves there is a hint of the spectral about the flying-fox, and it is not surprising that it should find a place in their legends and theories of the life after death.

136 Birds are of interest to the northern native mainly as
30 providing the plumes which, fastened together in head-
23 dresses, make him, as they are meant to do, more attractive in love and more terrifying in war. Thus parrots, kingfishers, and birds of paradise supply in their brilliant plumage one of the principal kinds of convertible wealth. The domestic cock is valued for the same reason, being mercilessly plucked and bereft of his sweeping tail feathers in

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[130] One might mention other insects that appeal to the imagination of the Orokaiva—the innocent-looking March-fly with its treacherous sting, the carpenter bee that riddles the light timbers of native houses, the warlike black ants [825] with their sudden migrations, the fire-flies in which, floating and luminous, he sees the eyeballs of the dead. None of these have much practical importance, but it is interesting to note that the Orokaiva, making his farewell address to the dead, bids him go to a place where March-flies and mosquitoes will cease from troubling him.

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form to his sweetheart, but was detected by a trickle of blood from his ear; or when the *sovai* woman revisited her husband and would have passed off for living had he not noticed the earth caked in her nostrils, and so suspected that she had risen from the grave.

Leaving this conception of the *sovai* as a ghost, visible or invisible, we may pass on to another with which it seems completely at variance: the *sovai* is supposed to take the form of some creature of the bush or river. No native has ever maintained that this form is subsequent, i.e. that the *sovai* is first a ghost and afterwards an animal, bird, or reptile, though there is little doubt that the ghostly form is thought of first when an individual has recently died. The general fact is that a native sometimes pictures the *sovai* in one way and sometimes in another. A great variety of creatures may be *sovai*—wallabies, cuscus, pigs, snakes, crocodiles, lizards, frogs, eels, bats, birds, and fishes; but it will be understood that of these species many members are normal or ordinary animals and nothing more, while others are *sovai*. The latter are commonly detected by some queerness or abnormality. For instance, if a snake were very active and writhed over much it would be called a *sovai*, simply, of course, because its slayers were startled or horrified into thinking it such. A lean and ugly cuscus, or a bush-pig that looked unusually rakish would excite the abhorrence of its captors, and a careful man would refrain from eating it. Sometimes the classification as *sovai* is retrospective. When a man falls ill he looks about him for possible causes, and recollects that he recently ate a flying-fox: he draws the conclusion that the flying-fox was a *sovai*. In several instances that came to my notice it was some association with the deceased that had caused the creature to be classed as *sovai*: when for instance a snake had been seen emerging from the grave shelter of a woman recently dead.

There is very little to say about the behaviour of the *sovai* animal. I was once told that thievish men turned into thievish animals such as pigs, rats, and flying-foxes—in which, however, there was no hint of retributive reincarnation but merely an association of ideas. The *sovai* creature

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is naturally regarded with fear and abhorrence: the case of the cuscus quoted above (p. 269) is one of the few in which it does not appear to possess a malignant and dangerous character. But it is not easily distinguished from the ordinary example of the same species, and it has often been killed and eaten before the difference is discovered.

This killing of the *sovai* animal raises the question of what we may call its constitution. It is obviously of a nature sufficiently corporeal to be killed and eaten. What is its relation to the deceased with whom it is identified? It would be tempting to suppose that the *sovai* in immaterial form possessed, or entered into, the animal as the evil spirits entered into the Gadarene swine. But I have never heard such an explanation from a native, and I do not know that we can infer that such a theory is in the back of his mind: on the other hand I have been assured that the animal *is* the *sovai*. Nevertheless, it survives what may be called the second death. A simple illustration of this belief is afforded by the following incident. A bush-pig found rooting a garden was speared and killed. That night the owner of the garden (who happened to be my informant) was visited in a dream by his deceased elder brother, who explained that the pig was himself: he had been hungry and had come to his brother's garden for food (by which news the owner was deeply affected and refrained from eating any of the pig).

The theory that best squares with this belief is not that the *sovai* is only an immaterial entity which can enter a concrete body, but that it is an entity of exceedingly variable nature, sometimes immaterial and sometimes material, which can change from a mere invisible breath to the solid body of a pig, or from that again to the appearance of a human being. Such a power of metamorphosis is often met with in the tales of *sovai*. When, for instance, a girl was supposedly kidnapped by *sovai*, her rescuers at length found her in the bush sitting amid a circle of them; when the rescuers made bold to approach, the *sovai* became birds and flew away. Or again, in one village the mourners found themselves after nightfall in the garden of the deceased and

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775 825 engaged in pitched battle with a large number of *sovai*; but whenever they brought down one of their opponents it would turn into a wallaby or a bird and make off.

One may mention at this point several variant forms of the *sovai*. The fire-fly (*swi*) is very commonly regarded as a *sovai* form; sometimes more fancifully it is said that the fire-flies are the eyeballs of the dead. Again, the phos- [824] phorescent fungi *himbaja* may be *sovai*, though, of course, they are not always so, and little boys will play with them quite fearlessly, fixing them as luminous disks to their foreheads at night time. Again, the *sovai* may take the form of the *siribo*, i.e. the nest of the termite in a tree, which for some reason always has an uncanny suggestion to an Orokaiva. [821] Again the meteor *hara* has been referred to in my hearing as a *sovai*, though I do not believe this to be an important or a general belief.

775 One variant, or rather specific, form of the *sovai* is, however, of great interest. When a man has been slain in fight he becomes a *diroga*, and although the actual form or forms of the *diroga* have never been accurately defined in my hearing, they all have this much in common that they are *i-sovai* —'upper' or 'on top' *sovai*—i.e. they do not belong to the earth or the stream, but flit about in the upper air, where they are sometimes heard to whistle as they pass. This singular, but apparently very general, belief has formed the groundwork of one of the variants of the Taro Cult, and a fuller description of the subject may be seen in the report on that movement.[1]

We may now pass to the third general form in which the *sovai* may appear, viz. that of a fiend or hobgoblin, or of any monstrous creature that inhabits the bush and is liable to attack the lonely wanderer. Various imaginative descriptions are given of the *sovai* in this character. They may have hairy bodies and long fangs; several have pictured them with eyes in the back of their heads; one informant who saw a *sovai* in his boyhood recalled with horror the unnatural skinniness of its arms and legs. It is in this form that the spirits of the dead are represented to the initiates among the

[1] 'The Taro Cult' in *Orokaiva Magic*, pp. 68–72.

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psychological, as well as its practical, interest will justify a full description.

The method which it is proposed to follow in this report may be briefly explained. Sections II–X will be devoted to a description of the movement; Sections XI and XII will consist of some comments, explanations, and suggestions upon it. The whole subject has proved to be far more complex than it at first appeared. It would not be possible to place one's finger on any particular fact and say, 'This explains everything'. Therefore in the latter part I have drawn attention to a number of considerations of various importance, without claiming that they afford anything like a complete explanation of the phenomena; and in the former part I have endeavoured, even at the cost of some repetition, to make the description as full as possible. This report is not an essay in which the evidence is all strictly relevant to the conclusions. The descriptive part of it will be found rather to outweigh the critical part. But it has been my object, at the risk of tedium, to set down all the information, so that others may be in a position to form their own opinions.

I am much indebted to Mr. Wurth the Resident Magistrate, and to Messrs. Elder and Holland of the Anglican Mission, for the information, the result of long-continued attention to the movement, which they have placed at my disposal, and which has been of considerable value in writing this report.

2. *Summary Description*

It was probably in the year 1911 that a native of Tufi, climbing Mount Victory alone, encountered a snake, and learnt from its mouth some strange facts of life and rules of conduct. Like Moses he went down from the mount unto the people and imparted to them his new knowledge. The snake was named *Baigona* and was, in true accord with the common doctrine of life after death among those people, a reincarnated spirit of the dead. Not only he, but all snakes were henceforward to be

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called *Baigona* and were to be treated with affection and respect. They must be hailed and welcomed whenever they were seen; to kill or eat them was forbidden. These taboos extended to a number of other creatures—lizards, crocodiles, cuscus, and the like—all of which, in native belief, are commonly the reincarnations of departed spirits.

The originator of this cult imparted his knowledge of certain medicines, rites, and taboos to others, and this kind of individual initiation was passed on until there grew up a clique of '*Baigona* men', who might be called priests of the new cult, and who were to be found in villages as far north as the German boundary.

Meanwhile the horde of ignorant and gullible believers rapidly increased, comprehending little more of the new order than the general taboo regarding reptiles. The genuine *Baigona* men professed to practise healing, but there was another side to their activities: there is little doubt that they were sorcerers to a man, who held the masses in considerable fear and practised an easy kind of extortion. Together with other methods of professed healing they underwent themselves, and induced in their patients, paroxysms of a peculiarly horrible nature. These paroxysms became the general vogue among all who were affected by the cult, and this, together with the practice of sorcery and extortion, led the Government to discourage and suppress the movement. The craft of the *Baigona* men was virtually stamped out ten years ago, though in the interior of the Northern Division there are still to be found regular *Baigona* practitioners who, with a strange amount of confidence in themselves, continue to try their cures upon strangely confident patients. This practice, however, is thought by the natives to be against the law of the Government, and is therefore only in secret. Despite certain effects which it has left on native custom, the *Baigona* cult may be said to have died out. On the whole one is tempted to class it as thoroughly obnoxious.

It was very soon replaced by another movement,

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was explained by Home in the following way. As the taro approaches maturity the outer leaves should droop and fall. He desired an early ripening of this particular crop, and felt that, by breaking off some of the larger leaves here and there, he would expedite the general falling of leaves which would indicate that the tubers were ready.

Some of the medicines used by the Taro men are apparently meant, not to stimulate the taro itself, but to provoke the shaking-fit or *jipari* in the Taro man. It may perhaps be felt that, by contributing in some way to the power of the latter, they contribute also, though indirectly, to the prosperity of the former. However, a Taro man of Wasida showed me, in strict secrecy, eight *jipari-kore*, or ' shaking medicines ', which were intended primarily to produce in him the condition of *jipari*. They included the amaranth (*Tumeni*) and the flame-coloured coxcomb (*Siroru*), both of them taken in the form of a cold infusion. The first, my informant said, gave him a headache.

Hovere, a wild verbena (?), and *Derega*, a very harmless-looking grass, were taken in a curiously indirect form: their seeds were burnt with lime which was subsequently taken with betel. Considering the method of lime-burning, it seems hardly possible that any effect could be produced on the lime by a few grass seeds; nevertheless, it was claimed that *Hovere* was a strong medicine. Two others, both creepers, were said to affect the legs of the Taro man. It has not been possible to have these various plants analysed, but I venture to think the labour of analysis would be largely wasted. As the number of native medicines is already so great, and as new medicines are constantly being added to the list, and as the reason for their efficacy, where it is understood, turns out to be simply magical, one may venture to say that in the vast majority of cases there is nothing in them. Empirically the native may discover stimulant or poisonous properties in certain plants, but in nine cases out of ten—

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probably much more often—the effect which he attributes to his medicine, i.e. the *jipari*, is due to a complex of excitement, bad example, and betel-nut.

As certain medicines are prescribed for the Taro man either to increase his own power or else to be transmitted by him to the taro itself, so on the other hand there are many restrictions placed upon him for negative, but similar, reasons. He is in fact dieted with some strictness, and the reasons which govern these food taboos are worth considering. In a great majority of cases the man who observes the taboo is completely ignorant of any logical basis for it: he has learnt it by rote, so to speak, having received it as part of the cult from his instructor, and not only has he never heard a sensible argument in its favour, but, if taxed for such an argument, can think of none save *ad verecundiam*. But sometimes one meets a native with a spark of imagination. The explanations which he may give of the taboos are not necessarily the original ones, but notwithstanding they are typical native explanations, and at least as good as the original. A few examples will show what real grounds there are for the prohibitions. *Pauri*, the cuscus, is forbidden because of the yellowish colour of its fur, dappled with brown spots. Should the Taro man eat *Pauri* it is likely that the taro leaf will develop similar properties instead of keeping the rich green colour which is indicative of health. *Auja*, the red pandanus seed, and *sasaru*, a kind of frog, are tabooed for the same reason. It was explained that the frog, when cooked, is of a yellow-brown colour which is unwholesome not so much for the Taro man as for the taro. *Ambe*, or sago, was avoided in some quarters because the roots at the butt of the palm are often exposed in a way that is not desirable for the taro tuber. *Imbaga* the crocodile, *wotomo* a kind of flat fish, and *obiti* the eel were 'too heavy'. The idea of weight seems to be associated very commonly with sickness, and it is felt that the Taro man who ate creatures in which this quality is so obviously embodied, would be endangering his power of healing.